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Piano City Milano 2023: an effort between public institutions and private companies

The Piano City Milano Festival at the Gallery of Modern Art (GAM) in Milan, Italy, features classical and jazz pianists from Italy and around the world

Piano City, Milan

Born in 2011, Piano City Milano brings opportunity to the Milanese people to self-indulge in piano concerts across the city. Today, from May twentieth-twenty second, a new metamorphosis of musical entities will be shown through the city, where there will be two hundred and nineteen events held, some in company, and others solo.

The opportunity to learn and play alongside the world's best will involve both young talents still in school, as well as notable names.

Artistic Director of Piano City, Ricciarda Belgiojoso

The message is clear: music is flowing through all hours of the day. Classical songs in the early hours of dawn awakening kids for school and accompanying strolls to espresso bars. Whereas smooth jazz is heard in the afternoon with a build up to a popular genre of piano techno after midnight, providing an after party to the late-night events on the weekend.

«Music should not only be for people who can afford to pay to go and sit in a conservatory, but it should be given to every person, even if they are just walking down the street and stop to listen. This music reaches the city, giving the Milanese a true freedom to be present and to enjoy».

Characterized as a project of and with the city, it is all thanks to several institutions, artists, networks and partners that makes everyone able to have a piano to play on. In twenty-twenty-two, taking place in over twenty-one locations throughout the municipality, pianos are strategically placed in areas that provide optimum acoustic elements, and architectural structures that frame the performance itself.

As former Pianist herself at Piano City and taking on the role as Artistic Director, Ricciarda Belgiojoso's past and present work in both music and architecture has helped her transform and make the event evolve, providing every year the framework to go above the year before, pushing the boundaries of everyone involved.

Architecture and music come together at Piano City

«I have been participating as a pianist since the first year of the festival. I was then involved in the artistic direction for six years now, around halfway through the entirety of the festival. As it has grown year by year, Titti Santini (co-founder and artistic director of Piano City Milano) called me to collaborate with him, and they have brought me on to share a different point of view», says Ricciarda Belgiojoso.

The two worlds that Ms. Belgiojoso comes from bring a close range of concepts and ideas, and also the practical realities of organizing such a large-scale event.

«We work on this musical program closely together with the pianists for harmony of realness and appropriate spaces as it is not a traditional festival. Our aim is to present piano solo concerts, but we have also had many twenty-one participants concerts as well, and I also took part in one of them. This brings more diversity to the audience; there is everyone from children to former performers. There are programs shown that are specially thought of for Piano City, in order to create something that people will carry a memory of with them forever».

Collaborations and Partnerships of Piano City Milano Festival 2023

Piano City Milano is made possible through a collaborative effort between public institutions and private companies. The festival has numerous partners, supporters, and technical partners, including the City of Milan, Corriere della Sera, Intesa Sanpaolo, Volvo, and more. The event also collaborates with musical institutions and organizations such as the Giuseppe Verdi Conservatory of Music, Piano Academy of Imola Incontri con il Maestro International Academy Foundation, and Milano Musica.

Piano City Milano Festival 2023 Features Artists in GAM Gardens

The Piano City Milano Festival at the Gallery of Modern Art (GAM) in Milan, Italy, features renowned classical and jazz pianists from Italy and around the world. The festival takes place from May 19-21, with evening concerts on the main stage by artists such as classical pianist Jin Ju, contemporary dancer Mourad Bouayad, and indie rock musician Jeremiah Fraites. During the day, pianists perform in two different spaces, the pond and the garden, with a variety of programs featuring works by Beethoven, Chopin, Prokofiev, and more. The festival also includes a corner bar serving St-Germain Hugo cocktails with a floral touch.

Piano City Milano: A Festival of Music, Literature, and Learning

The festival features 26 appointments, each with its own genre, such as Bas Bulteel's music merging with visual art, Silvia Lama and Vladislav Mantic Lugo's romantic repertoire, and Michele Fedrigotti's new musical project 'Around the lake of the Shining Princess'. There are also courtyard concerts in all neighborhoods of the city, and four exceptional concerts in collaboration with MMspa and Consorzio Cooperative Lavoratori. Additionally, there are Piano Reading encounters between great writers and the piano, Piano Lessons with great masters revealing the secrets of the trade, and even a dialogue on Milanese auteur recipes between journalist and author Sara Porro and young talent Ginevra Negri Costantini.

One of the highlights of the festival is the world premiere of Demian Dorelli's 'My Window' at dawn on May 21 in the breathtaking setting of Piazzale del Cimitero Monumentale. Other notable events include the meeting between writer Antonio Scurati and young pianists Siwen Chen, Marina Miani and Carla Sgoifo at Triennale Milano, and the lesson on the piano work of George Benjamin by Erik Bersch and Oreste Bossini in collaboration with the 32nd Milano Musica Festival Fugitive Actions at the Leonardo Da Vinci National Museum of Science and Technology.

Piano City: a space for new talents

«Cultivating new talents is also a priority. Seeing young names starting their career at Piano city is a feeling like no other, and only in this sort of festival can these musicians harvest their own audience. The open mindedness of Piano City is an opportunity to discover music. It's also about finding influences that are unexpected that helps you gain a new point of view. (From the perspective of the artistic direction) We work on two main areas. We work on the music dealing with the pianists, and on the programs so that we can match the different locations that we work within the city. This festival is not just about discovering music, it is also about discovering the dynamics of the city. It's a way to live through a moving city. In this year's program, we have several new locations that did not exist even two years ago – parks, museums, universities, suburban areas. It's a puzzle that we construct to match the music locations».

Whether there is classical music flowing through the streets of a retired community, smooth jazz, or electronic sounds flowing through a university campus, there is something for everyone.

Founders of Piano City, Daniela Cattaneo Diaz and Titti Santini

«The two founders of Piano City, Daniela Cattaneo Diaz and Titti Santini, gained the presence of Ludovico Einaudi, who shared the spirit of the freedom of having music in abnormal spaces. As soon as it was an idea, it was an opportunity as it was the first of its kind».

It is a moment of time where acclaimed pianists that have put their hats in the ring of performing in traditional halls, look to Piano City with a refreshing eye. Also, having shorter performances of one hour is enough to have time to enjoy the show, as well as to have the freedom to move around, bringing a new energy to concert culture.

«Encouragement is key when colliding the worlds of musicians. This year there will be a show of thirty-six pianists, performing the nine symphonies of Beethoven played continuously for six hours by nine professionals, each mentoring three young talents. Collaborations are truly relevant in the festival. We work with many institutions, such as the municipality of Milan. Working each year on new venues, also means to understand what the programming is in all of these places. Lastly, collaborating with multiple partners, as all of the concerts are for free, this is because we manage our efforts with them and involve them in the creative process. The social aspect of music is just as significant as anything else, finding chances to bring music to hospitals, shelters and rougher parts of the city, excluding none and embracing all».

Finally, technicalities should not be forgotten as well. This is music in the city, but not just any music. Pianos that weigh upwards 300 kilograms take precise logistics, tuning, protecting and expertise, backed by partners that lend instruments shared by many great names.

The social aspect of Piano City Milano

«The principal challenge with artistically directing Piano City is certainly a complicated technical matter. Often, we have to present new productions, create new albums and share innovative names. On the other hand, to work with a list of artists – including Omar Sosa, Hauschka, Katia and Marielle Labèque, Olafur Arnalds, Hania Rani, Sebastien Tellier, Rufus Wainwright and more – who are so looking forward to presenting, that is the most gratifying feeling».

The social aspect of Piano City Milano also brings enlightenment to sometimes forgotten communities. In suburbs, hospitals, shelters and detention centers, life is sometimes overlooked, but bringing back the excitement of music is a reward.

«It's good to see there is a strong desire for concerts, people want to attend in person. But on the other side, traditional concert halls can be frightening. An open-air festival such as Piano City helps to encourage everyone regain some excitement of live music»

Piano City

Piano City Milano is a renowned piano festival in Italy, organized by Associazione Pianocity Milano, in collaboration with the City of Milan, Ministry of Tourism, and Ministry of Culture. The festival, now in its 12th edition, features more than 250 concerts across Milan and other locations, with over 300 artists performing in 20 locations. The event aims to promote an active city through music and a widespread program throughout the territory. It is curated by Ponderosa Music&Art and hdemia, with Ricciarda Belgiojoso and Titti Santini serving as artistic directors.

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The writer does not work for, consult, own shares in or receive funding from any company or organization that would benefit from this article.